

In Tractate Rosh Hashanah 10b-11a in the Babylonian Talmud, the following argument is recorded, “Rabbi Eliezer says, ‘In *Nisan* Israel was redeemed. However, in the future Israel will be redeemed in *Tishri*.’ Rabbi Joshua says, ‘In *Nisan* Israel was redeemed. Israel will be redeemed in the future in *Nisan* as well.’”



The debate here is seemingly insignificant – an arcane point of speculation akin to the proverbial disputation among medieval scholastics as to how many angels dance on the head of a pin. If this debate were no more than a speculative discussion concerning the date of a future redemption, then it would indeed be of little consequence – a trivial argument incapable of empirical resolution.

However, what distinguishes Rabbi Eliezer from Rabbi Joshua in this *gemara* is much more important than such a literal reading of the passage would suggest. For this argument masks a philosophical-religious dispute as to the nature of redemption itself.

*Nisan* is the month of Passover, the time when the Jewish people were redeemed from Egypt. The redemption that informs Passover is one the tradition states was marked by *hesed* – grace. The deeds performed by *‘am yisrael* did not earn the people their freedom. Rather, the liberation from Egyptian bondage was solely the result of divine mercy. God redeemed Israel despite their lack of merit.

*Tishri* is the month of the *Yamim Noraim*, the High Holy Day season when Israel stands before God in judgment. In contrast to *Nisan*, the redemption that comes forth during *Tishri* is the result of human performance. The acts that an individual and a people carry out play a large part in determining whether redemption will occur. When Rabbi Eliezer maintains, “In the future, Israel will be redeemed in *Tishri*,” he reminds us that our deeds are crucial and that our accomplishments are capable of mending the world.

As the days of *Tishri* approach and as we prepare for the High Holy Days this religious message is a critical one that affirms the role that God calls upon us to play as covenantal partners in the process of *tikkun ‘olam*. This issue of *The Chronicle* seeks to demonstrate that HUC-JIR confirms its faith in this message through the activities that unfold among our students, faculty, and alumni.

In this issue brief accounts are provided of the diverse career paths three of our recent graduates have taken as they attempt each in their own way to improve the world. We also celebrate our largest entering class in over a decade, and allow our incoming students to speak for themselves as to their aspirations as they embark upon their careers of service to the Jewish people and religion. The heartening story of how so many of our first year students in Israel during the

last academic year served the Jewish community of the FSU during their Passover vacation reflects the commitments that inform our students as they prepare for their vocations. And the phenomenal growth of the Miller High School Honors

Program is also celebrated as the College-Institute attempts to play a role in the education of a future generation of Jewish leaders.

HUC-JIR regards its responsibility to educate our students as a sacred trust, and our Provost Norman Cohen reports on the new rabbinical core curriculum that has been inaugurated at HUC-JIR this year under his direction. This initiative has far-ranging implications for every program at our school, and Rabbi Cohen describes the substance and the hopes that inform and motivate this initiative as our institution attempts to fulfill its mandate as a school of applied scholarship.

Of course, this means that scholarship must remain at the heart of our enterprise. Learning is what grants authenticity to our institution. Articles on the unparalleled scholarly contributions that have made Michael Meyer the preeminent modern Jewish historian in the world as well as the many academic accomplishments of our alumni testify to the central role HUC-JIR accords scholarship. William Cutter indicates how the recent *Festschrift* he co-edited in honor of Professor Arnold Band of UCLA reflects the ongoing academic commitments and contributions of our faculty. And the profile on Tamara Cohn Eskenazi and the exciting and original *Women’s Commentary on Torah* that she is now editing under the sponsorship of the Women of Reform Judaism indicates how HUC-JIR is at the forefront of creative academic and religious commentary and research. The exploits of our faculty members Sara Lee and David Weisberg in China are reported and a preview of the forthcoming faculty lecture series at Florida Atlantic University as well as educational opportunities for alumni and adult learners are also provided in these pages. The reach of the College-Institute through the scholarship of our faculty and alumni is truly global.

In all these ways the College-Institute seeks to discharge the task assigned the Jewish people by God and articulated by Rabbi Eliezer. *Tishri* bids us acknowledge the need for human action and asserts that redemption is contingent upon our human aims and achievements. We celebrate such aims and achievements in the pages of this journal, and remain committed to such tasks and ends.

May all of you who read these words observe a meaningful High Holy Day season, and to all of you I would offer the traditional Sephardic salutation for this time of year, “*Tizku l’shanim rabbot* – May you merit many years of joy and accomplishment.”

Rabbi David Ellenson, Ph.D.